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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1-3, 5-9, 11, 13-17, and 19, and add claims 20-25 as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A voice service system comprising:

[[ - ]] an interactive voice response unit for interactively dealing with a call from a human caller by using predetermined responses,

[[ - ]] an operator subsystem by which a human operator can verbally interact with the caller by giving appropriate responses regardless of the predetermined responses available to the voice response unit, the operator subsystem including a masking arrangement for causing the verbal interaction between the operator and the caller to be done through a synthesized voice whereby to mask from the caller that the caller is talking to a human operator; and

[[ - ]] a transfer arrangement for transferring handling of the call from at least in one direction between the operator subsystem ~~[[and]] to the voice response unit; the operator subsystem including a masking arrangement for causing the operator's verbal interaction with the caller to be done through a synthesised voice whereby to mask from the caller that they~~

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~~recogniser~~ recognizer for receiving voice input from the operator and generating text messages.

6. (Currently amended) A voice service system according to claim 5, wherein ~~the text messages output by the speech recogniser are passed~~ recognizer is arranged for passing the text messages output thereby to an editing console of the operator subsystem to enable the operator to check and edit the messages prior to output to the text-to-speech converter.

7. (Currently amended) A voice service system according to claim 1, wherein the transfer arrangement includes an analysis subsystem for analysing ~~the caller's inputs~~ caller input when the voice response unit is handling the call whereby to determine whether the caller requires operator assistance[[:]], the analysis subsystem being operative, upon determining that the caller requires operator assistance, to cause the transfer arrangement to transfer the call to the operator subsystem.

8. (Currently amended) A voice service system comprising an interactive voice response unit for interactively dealing with a call from a human caller by using predetermined responses, an operator subsystem by which a human operator can verbally interact with the caller by giving appropriate responses

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being done through a ~~synthesised~~ synthesized voice whereby to mask from the caller that ~~they are~~ the caller is talking to a human operator.

10. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 9, wherein the operator's verbal interaction with the caller ~~involves~~ includes generating a text message from operator input and passing this message through a text-to-speech converter to output the operator input in said synthesized voice.

11. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 10, wherein the text-to-speech converter is part of the voice response unit and provides the same ~~synthesised~~ synthesized voice to the caller whether the call is interaction with the operator or the voice response unit.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 10, wherein the operator generates the text message using a keyboard.

13. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 10, wherein the operator generates the text message through a speech ~~recogniser~~ recognizer.

14. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 13, wherein the text message output by the speech ~~recogniser~~

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regardless of the predetermined responses available to the voice response unit, and transfer means for transferring handling of the call between the voice response unit and the operator subsystem[[;]], the voice service system having masking means for causing the operator's verbal interaction with the caller to be done through a ~~synthesized~~ synthesized voice whereby to mask from the caller that ~~they are~~ the caller is now talking to a human operator, the transfer means being usable by the operator to have handling of a call transferred to the voice response unit.

9. (Currently amended) A method of providing voice services in respect of a call placed by a human caller, the method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

(a) carrying out an verbal interaction between the caller and a human operator;

(b) at the instigation of the operator, transferring the call to an interactive voice response unit; and

(c) continuing verbal interaction with the caller through the voice response unit[[.]] by using predetermined responses, the operator's verbal interaction with the caller in [[step]]

(a) by giving appropriate responses regardless of the predetermined responses available to the voice response unit,

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recognizer is checked and, where required, edited by the operator at an editing console prior to output to the text-to-speech converter.

15. (Currently amended) A method of providing voice services in respect of a call placed by a human caller, the method comprising ~~the steps of~~:

(a) enabling voice interaction between the caller and a voice response unit;

(b) ~~analysing~~ analyzing the caller's interaction with the voice response unit to determine whether the caller requires operator assistance;

(c) ~~where this analysis indicates that~~ in response to the analysis indicating operator assistance is required, transferring the call to a human operator; and

(d) carrying out a verbal interaction between the caller and a human operator, ~~this~~ said verbal interaction being unrestricted by the range of responses available for output by the voice response unit and being done through a synthesized voice whereby to mask from the caller that ~~they are~~ the caller is talking to a human operator.

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16. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 15, wherein the ~~operator's~~ verbal interaction with ~~the caller~~ ~~involves~~ includes generating a text message from operator input and passing this message through a text-to-speech converter to output the operator input in said synthesized voice.

17. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 16, wherein the text-to-speech converter is part of the voice response unit and provides the same ~~synthesised~~ synthesized voice to the caller whether the call is interaction with the operator or the voice response unit.

18. (Original) A method according to claim 16, wherein the operator generates the text message using a keyboard.

19. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 16, wherein the operator generates the text message through a speech ~~recogniser~~ recognizer.

20. (New) The system of claim 1, wherein the operator subsystem is arranged to enable the operator to also verbally interact with the caller by causing the voice response unit to output an operator-selected one of said predetermined responses.

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21. (New) The method of claim 9, wherein (a) includes the operator interacting with the caller by causing the voice response unit to output an operator-selected one of said predetermined responses.

22. (New) A telephony method comprising:

a caller calling a called station;

the called station responding to the caller by transmitting a first predetermined synthesized speech message to the caller;

the caller responding to the first predetermined synthesized speech message in a manner causing a human operator associated with the called station to respond with speech utterances;

synthesizing the speech utterances; and

transmitting the synthesized speech utterances to the caller so the synthesized speech utterances appear to the caller to be from the same source as the first predetermined synthesized speech message.

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23. (New) The method of claim 22, further including:

the caller responding to the synthesized speech utterances by transmitting a further message to the called station; and

the called station responding to the further message by transmitting a second predetermined synthesized message to the caller so the second predetermined synthesized message appears to the caller to be from the same source as the first predetermined synthesized message and the synthesized speech utterances.

24. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the synthesized speech utterances are from an actual voice utterance of the operator.

25. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the synthesized speech utterances are from a recorded audio source.